Changing interests in EU development cooperation: the impact of EU membership and advancing integration

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This chapter examines two main lines of developments *within* the European Union that have affected the geographical scope of, political priority for, and substantive orientation of, its development cooperation policy. They are, respectively, the changes in EU membership over time and the ever advancing European integration process. These two processes functioned both as incentives and as restraining factors for the elaboration of EU development cooperation policy and programmes. This chapter shows that their overall impact on development policy has been significant, especially since the 1990s. In particular, (prospects of) expanding EU membership, Constituent Treaty changes, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the pressure to increase accountability, transparency and efficiency, have diluted the Union's interest in development cooperation with the South.

The implications of changing EU membership for development cooperation

Between 1957 and 1995, the original six-member European Economic Community grew to the current fifteen-member European Union. The changes in EU membership that occurred over time have clearly influenced the geographical scope of, and political climate for, EU development cooperation policy. Further such changes can be expected in the first decades of the twenty-first century, as the Union's membership is likely to grow significantly in the near future by enlargement with perhaps another thirteen countries in central, (south-) eastern and southern Europe. For Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic are likely to accede to the European Union in 2004. In early 2000, preparations began for the accession of Bulgaria and Romania (Werts, 2002a, b). The accession of Turkey might be anticipated as well, but perhaps at a different pace.

Influencing the geographical scope of EC development policy and programmes

It is well known that since the early days of the European integration process some individual member states directed the external relations agenda towards the interests of particular (groups of) developing countries with which they had close (colonial and post-colonial) relations. France did so most openly and forcefully by making its accession to the to-be-established European Economic Community dependent on a preferential regime for its 'overseas countries and territories' (see also chapter 7). This resulted in the start of Community development cooperation policy in the form of the 'association paragraph' of the Rome Treaty, which applied to a specified list of developing countries, mainly African and Francophone.

When the United Kingdom first negotiated accession to the European Community in 1961–62, it also made a strong point of accommodating the interests of its own former colonies. This would be repeated during the second round of its accession negotiations in the early 1970s (Tulloch, 1975: 37, 101–3; Grilli, 1993: 16; Todd, 1999: 62–3). As a result, when the UK finally joined the European Community in 1973, the group of recipients of EC development assistance was drastically expanded to include a large number of the UK's Commonwealth cooperation partners in Anglophone Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (Glaser, 1990: 27). Thereafter, the UK tabled proposals effectively to expand further the range of aid beneficiaries in Asia (Tulloch, 1975: 108; McMahon, 1998: 171; Bonet, 1999: 255).

After the accession of Greece in 1981, and especially that of Spain and Portugal in 1986, a process of increasing attention to the development needs of countries in Latin America and the Mediterranean took off. Spain also played a leading role, in the 1980s and early 1990s, in forging closer cooperation between the EU and Cuba (Byron, 2000: 28–9).

The reasons for the changes in the relations with Latin America, which consisted of increasing aid allocations and intensifying trade relations, were at least three-fold. Firstly, there was optimism about the continent's development prospects, especially its trade potential. Secondly, the traditional historical and linguistic ties between countries in Latin America, Spain and Portugal played a part. Thirdly, the Spanish Development Commissioner Manuel Marin made important personal efforts (see also Barbé, 1998 and McMahon, 1998: 137–70).

In relation to the Mediterranean, the accession to the European Community of the three northern Mediterranean countries, Spain, Portugal and Greece, created a number of problems for agricultural products such as wine, olive oil, citrus fruits and tomatoes, produced both by member and non-member Mediterranean countries (Tsoukalis, 1981: 222–32, 252). Recognition of these problems, in combination with protectionism in favour of agricultural products produced within the European Community, could well explain the pattern of change that has occurred in the sectoral allocation of EC assistance to the Mediterranean (and the Middle East) since. Overall, the

assistance programme for the Mediterranean has grown significantly. However, between 1986 and 1998 allocable aid for the sensitive agricultural sector dropped from a major share of 23 per cent to 5 per cent. Instead, non-controversial aid for water supply projects, education and health rose steeply (Cox and Chapman, 1999: 76). Through the years, existing Mediterranean member states have stimulated EU attention for the Mediterranean. Spain in particular, playing the card of geographical proximity, promoted increased concern within Europe about (real or perceived) security issues, including the areas of migration, drug trafficking and the environment. This led to an intensification of contacts between the EU and the Mediterranean (Lister, 1997: 30–4, 83–90, 106; Barbé, 1998: 119, 125–6; van Reisen, 1999: 46–52).

Accordingly, there has been a historical pattern of new European Community member states influencing the geographical scope of EC development policy and programmes. Can such effects already be traced as a consequence of the joining of the newest member states, Austria, Finland and Sweden, that obtained European Union membership in 1995? While it is hard to substantiate such an influence firmly, it seems obvious that, by their geographical location and history, these countries are likely to be among the Union members most interested in the political, economic and social development of Central and Eastern Europe. This could well turn out to be a source of additional support for the already clearly established trend to step up assistance efforts for countries in that region. The latter trend will be dealt with further in the next section of this chapter. Also, the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden has increased the number of EU member states that are not tied to a (significant) colonial past and do not necessarily share the automatic attention and preference for Europe's traditional developing country partners. This came, for example, to the fore in the post-Lomé discussions on the possible extension of the ACP group to non-ACP LDCs (e.g. Bhutan and Nepal), which the Nordic countries were in favour of (van Reisen, 1997: 164; see also Grilli, 1993: 65–71). Accordingly, the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden is likely to give additional clout to the long-time position of those member states that since the 1960s have argued in favour of a globalisation of Community development policy. The balance between EU member states which are in favour of a development policy that primarily targets a limited number of traditional developing country cooperation partners (e.g. Belgium and France), and those which, equally principled, are in favour of extending the same treatment to a broader group of developing countries in need of support (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden) has definitely changed. This might lead to small further changes in the geographical scope of EC development policy and programmes in the future.

Substantive changes

Hand in hand with the changes that took place in the regional and country orientation of EC development cooperation, through the years its substantive

direction and the overall policy climate also changed as a result of the expanding Community membership. An example of the latter was presented above, concerning the shift away from support for the agricultural sector of the southern Mediterranean. More broadly, a growing group of so-called 'like-minded countries' emerged that distinguish themselves from other member states by a relatively large priority and budget for development cooperation and/or by pronounced ideas about the policy area. In this context, the like-minded countries are Germany, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. When deemed necessary, these countries consult each other intensively before important meetings of the Development Council of Ministers, the EDF Committee and other important bodies, to maximise the chances of their voices being heard and proposals being adopted. Within this group, the Nordic EU member states' Development Ministers meet regularly to coordinate their policies (Arnórsson, 1999: 91–2). More recently, the (all female) Development Ministers of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK came to meet for similar purposes in the so-called 'Utstein Group'. Under the influence of the like-minded countries, a number of new issues and foci entered the European Community development cooperation agenda. Among such new issues are, for example, gender, debt relief, and the quality and efficiency of aid. The clearest example of a new focus is poverty alleviation (see, for example, Cox *et al.*, 1997: 139; Arnórsson, 1999: 102–3; Todd, 1999: 66–7; Turner, 1999).

So far, the accession of new member states has increased economic and political divergence within the Union (see, for example, Tsoukalis, 1981: 252–4, Barbé, 1998: 126), resulting both in geographic and substantive policy changes. The implications of the current European Union enlargement process and the further changes in EU membership that are likely to occur in that context are difficult to forecast at this stage. In any case, there will be an increase in the number of member states that are facing serious development challenges and problems themselves. One would expect this circumstance to be likely to reduce general support, and perhaps available resources, for EC development cooperation.

Advancing European integration

The European integration process was for quite some time primarily internally directed. Efforts to establish the single European market and European Monetary Union, and all the complicated details that arose in these domains, enjoyed clear priority. As an economic actor, the European Community gained importance and strength. However, apart from the traditional and/or unavoidable external activities of the European Community and its member states in the spheres of development cooperation and trade respectively, the Union at large lacked both the mandate and the means to build a coherent and comprehensive external relations face. For example, until 1992 hardly any common objectives had been formulated for Community development cooper-

ation or European Political Cooperation. This contradiction between an internally ever more integrated Europe and an externally under-developed entity, or between an economic giant and political dwarf (after Lister, 1997: 18; see also van Reisen, 1999), gradually came to be seen as undesirable, both within the Union/Community and their institutions themselves and by other relevant actors such as non-governmental organisations and academics.

Constituent Treaty changes

The 1992 Maastricht Treaty on European Union heralded the beginning of serious change in the internal–external dichotomy described above. Its Title V formally established the Common Foreign and Security Policy, set the CFSP objectives and provided some instruments through which they might be realised. These provisions were slightly elaborated and streamlined in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam. According to the latter's Article 11, the CFSP shall pursue to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests, independence and integrity of the Union; strengthen the security of the Union in all ways; preserve peace and strengthen international security; promote international cooperation and develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. According to Article 12, the CFSP instruments are: the definition of CFSP principles and general guidelines, common strategies, joint actions, Common Positions and the strengthening of systematic cooperation between the member states. Similarly, the Maastricht Treaty extended a formal Constituent Treaty-based mandate for development cooperation policy to the European Community and listed the direct objectives to be 'fostered' by it. They are: 'the sustainable economic and social development of the developing countries, and more particularly the most disadvantaged among them'; 'the smooth and gradual integration of the developing countries into the world economy'; and 'the campaign against poverty in the developing countries'. In addition, EC development policy is supposed to contribute to a goal that was also set for the CFSP. This is 'the general objective of developing and consolidating democracy and the rule of law, and to that of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms' (Articles 3q and 130u of the 1992 Maastricht version of the EC Treaty). The Treaty of Amsterdam, in slightly more elaborate wording, reiterated the (especially in the context of overlapping mandates) crucially important consistency principle that had already been introduced in Maastricht: 'The Union shall in particular ensure the consistency of its external activities as a whole in the context of its external relations, security, economic and development policies.' Such consistency is to be safeguarded by the Council and the Commission, which shall cooperate to this end (Article 3 of the 1997 Amsterdam version of the EU Treaty).

The sum total of these Constituent Treaty changes firmly established the Community/Union mandates and procedures in the spheres of development cooperation and foreign policy. That achievement by itself is likely to trigger an

increase in Community/Union activities in these fields. In his general analysis of the impact of the EU's institutional framework or evolving 'acquis communautaire' on member states' choices concerning cooperation, for example in European foreign economic policy, Young (2000: 93–116) argued that 'the EU's evolving institutional framework structures the member governments' choices about cooperation in new policy areas'. Oberthür dealt with similar aspects in the environmental sphere (1999: 641–59). He concluded that the EU 'has had difficulties in leading on issues not firmly established on its policy agenda. On subjects for which European legislation existed, coherent EU leadership at the international level has been more frequent.' Accordingly, the Treaty changes in the sphere of development referred to above should be seen as important potential incentives for stepping up both the making and implementation of development cooperation policy. However, the newly established mandates are all shared with the member states. In other words, next to the European Community/Union's competence in development cooperation and foreign policy, the member states maintain their own individual competence as well. Experience has shown that such a sharing of mandates opens up a whole range of uncertainty and possibilities for individual member states to fall back on their national competence and interests if the Community/Union's line does not please them. Such patterns have been described by Meunier and Nicolaïdis (1999: 477–501, esp. 497–8) for the area of trade, and by this author for the area of human rights and development cooperation (Arts, 2000: 165, 254–5; 371). They are a serious potential obstacle to further stepping up development policy efforts, especially as regards implementation.

Consistency in EU external relations

Another interesting possible effect of the Constituent Treaty changes which were set out above lies in the aspect of consistency. Much more explicitly than before, the Treaties now formally link together the political, security, economic and development aspects of EU external relations at large. This is done, as mentioned already, through codification of the general principle of consistency for EU external relations and through more detailed Articles on coherence in the development cooperation Title of the EC Treaty. The creation of the office of the 'High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy', currently taken up by Javier Solana, could perhaps also be seen as a means to increase consistency in external relations, although his summary mandate does not refer to this at all (Article 26 of the 1997 Amsterdam version of the Treaty on European Union). The implications of this are uncertain and not necessarily positive for development cooperation policy and especially not for its implementation.

However, if the consistency assignment is interpreted as requiring coordination of all policy measures and instruments, so as to ensure that they mutually reinforce each other rather than contradict, this element of change might work out positively for development cooperation. For example, development is

an essential (though not the only) condition for security, respect for human rights, democracy, and so on. In that light, the linking of all external policy aspects could well point to the need to increase development assistance to a particular country or region. On the other hand, the newly prescribed consistency element could also work out negatively for development cooperation. In particular, this would be the case when some aspects of external relations, such as overall political relations, would be regarded as of primary importance and others, such as development cooperation, as in the service thereof. This would lead to an undesirable further politicisation of European Community development cooperation. Unfortunately, this is not an unlikely option, as illustrated by the following remarks by Development Commissioner Poul Nielson, made in April 2000: 'Being more active collectively could strengthen our hand in foreign policy. And as foreign policy is increasingly becoming a joint European effort, development cooperation should logically follow and support' (Nielson, 2000: 5).

The intensification of efforts to elaborate the Constituent Treaty provisions concerning foreign policy and development cooperation reflects the existence of at least some political will to strengthen the European Union's external face to make it match its – by now pretty strong – internal face. More broadly, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the search for a stronger external identity and greater visibility and public appreciation of the European Union's international political and developmental efforts has become a fairly important push factor for the EU's agenda and its level and means of action. For example, at least partly as a consequence of these considerations, the Union has thrown itself into a mass programme for supporting reconstruction and humanitarian relief for Kosovo, assigning itself a leadership role but also stretching its implementation capacity to the very limit (see, for example, Haglund, 2001). And, according to Commissioner Nielson, one of the major reasons for reformulating the European Community's development policy, as announced in an April 2000 Commission Communication, was that 'an explanation is overdue of why European Community development cooperation matters and what place it should have in the world of international donors' (Nielson, 2000: 1). More specifically, this apparently has inspired a new determination on the side of the Commission to create a stronger profile for the European Union in relevant multilateral fora, as announced in its April 2000 'Communication on the European Community's Development Policy'. According to the Commission, 'it has to be recognised that the EU's large-scale disbursement does not entail proportional influence' (CEC, 2000a: 14). For example, the EU 'as a whole, financed . . . 64 per cent of the cost of structural adjustment programmes in Africa, while the cumulated voting right of the Member States in the IMF is only 27 per cent' (CEC, 2000a: 15). The Commission now explicitly seeks to reinforce the Union's position in 'the discussions on economic reform policies or other major topics which constitute key issues for developing economies' (CEC, 2000a: 15). In May 2000, External Relations

Commissioner Chris Patten justified yet another Commission reform in the sphere of the management of external assistance programmes with the argument that it 'will restore its credibility as a foreign policy actor in one of the major fields of external EU action' (CEC, 2000b; see also CEC, 2000c).

Increasing accountability, transparency and efficiency

Another major cluster of, again, both potential incentives for and obstacles to elaborating European Community development cooperation policy is found in the overall pressure on the EC/EU to increase accountability, transparency and efficiency. During the 1990s, persistent reports about such things as inefficient spending of resources in various policy areas, corruption within the Commission, fraud by members of the European Parliament and other negative features, seriously affected the public image of the Community/Union. This trend, together with the strengthening powers of the European Parliament and rising interest in 'Europe' in national politics in the member states, has created a climate in which justifying the EC/EU's involvement in a particular issue and accounting for the ensuing results has rapidly gained importance. Specifically for development cooperation, this trend has, among others, directly resulted in greater attention to evaluation exercises within the Commission. Roughly since 1995, ever more frequently and systematically, evaluations of Community development cooperation activities have been undertaken. While there is still a lot of scope for improvement in this field, the increase in number and depth of evaluations has been facilitated by supportive policy-making efforts in the various relevant Evaluation Units of the Commission (e.g. in former DG VIII and the Joint Service for External Relations). The main results of a number of major evaluations of Community development assistance (1986–95) and humanitarian aid (1991–96) exposed some common problems which, if addressed, will bring about an intensification of policy making and implementation in the field of development cooperation (ICEA/DPPC, 1999).

In the opinion of the Commission, essentially these problems are growing pains 'where policies and structures have not been adapted sufficiently fast to meet the growing responsibilities of the Community in the more-and-more complex area of development cooperation' (CEC, 2000a: 14). In line with many of its critics, the Commission, for example, has found the EC aid system to be 'too complex and fragmented' and that '[p]olicies are guided by the instruments rather than by policy objectives and clearly defined priorities' (CEC, 2000a: 14). It also signalled staffing problems. For managing 10 million US dollars of aid, the Commission has 2.9 staff members. Compared with 4.3 at the World Bank and between 4 and 9 in the major member states, this is indeed not generous. On the other hand, according to some (including the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Eveline Herfkens), with a better monitoring of the quality of Commission staff in combination with better use of multilateral development cooperation channels, expansion of Commission development staff would not be justified.

Among the signs of concrete changes being made to remedy some of the evaluation results are the May 2000 'Commission Communication on the reform of the management of external assistance' and the post-Lomé changes in ACP-EC relations. The Cotonou Agreement, for example, abandons Stabex and Sysmin. For all except the least developed countries among the ACP, Cotonou replaces the general preferential trade regime by still to be negotiated regional free trade arrangements. Thus long-standing Lomé instruments, which already for quite some time have been criticised for being outdated and ineffective, finally are being replaced. Unfortunately, it is not so clear that the newly proposed instruments, including the post-Lomé regional free trade arrangements, will indeed bring positive change. The 'integrated framework for Community activities' in development cooperation that the Commission proposed as another element of a possible solution (CEC, 2000a: 23) is rather disappointing. It is very general and hardly adds anything to what was already derived from the Constituent Treaty texts. If the relevant actors do not succeed in identifying and providing remedies to the established shortcomings of Community development cooperation, in the long run this may lead to a decrease of activity in this area and perhaps a retreat to the bilateral policies of the member states. At this stage, it is impossible to forecast which of the two possible scenarios – that is, an increase or a decrease of priority for Community development cooperation – ultimately will materialise as a result of the greater scrutiny of the effectiveness of relevant Community activities.

Another line that the European Community institutions have taken, at least partly in response to the increasing criticism of the quality and effectiveness of European development cooperation, lies in the involvement of civil society. For a long time the role of non-governmental actors in the making and implementation of European development policy was fairly limited. Since the late 1990s, however, the Commission and Council of Ministers have made more serious attempts to open up to civil society. Accordingly, on several occasions since the mid-1990s, relatively broad processes of consultation took place before major policy changes were finally decided upon. Examples include the consultations on the November 1996 Green Paper (CEC, 1996) the civil society input into the subsequent broader debate on the future of the Lomé Convention, and the preparatory process of the April 2000 Commission 'Communication on the European Community's Development Policy'. In the latter, the Commission stated that it now 'considers civil society one of the key pillars of its development policy' (CEC, 2000a: 28). In order to involve civil society actors in Community development policy, the Commission now aims to define 'methodologies and framework' for the:

- Information, consultation and dialogue with civil society actors on the establishment of development policies and strategies.
- Reinforcement of the capacities of civil society actors.

- The involvement of civil society actors in the design and implementation of cooperation programmes.
- Decentralised cooperation whereby actors at the local level take direct responsibility for the drawing up and implementation of cooperation programmes.' (CEC 2000a: 28–9)

Whether the new space for civil society will bring about an increase or a decrease in the Community development programme again is not so clear. The greater emphases on the value of consulting civil society actors and on the need to strengthen civil society's capacity to take part in the designing and planning of development cooperation programmes or projects may well lead to an increase initially. However, particularly for the implementation of such programmes and projects, if the new policy line is pursued seriously, and if successful, in the long run this may well result in a shift away from the Community to civil society itself as the main implementing actor. In any case it is clear that the days of strictly intergovernmental Community development cooperation are over.

Conclusion

In broad terms, this chapter has explored some of the current general determinants of the geographical and substantive scope of European Community development cooperation. In particular over the last decade, these have changed rather drastically. The accession of new members to the European Community/Union during the 1970s and 1980s brought clear changes to both elements of scope. However, perhaps the most bold of such changes are still to come as a result of the expected enlargement of the Union with Central and (south-) Eastern European countries. Through the years, the group of recipients of Community development aid and preferential trade arrangements has grown significantly. The traditionally preferred partners in development cooperation of the European Union, largely its former colonies, have definitely lost this position and are unlikely to recapture it.

The advancing process of European integration has resulted in a dynamic complex of new determinants. These include new Constituent Treaty mandates, the drive for consistency and overall strengthening of the European Union's external dimension, and the related current trend to push for greater accountability, transparency and efficiency of Community/Union actions, among other factors through greater civil society involvement. For most of these determinants it is hard to foresee at this stage whether ultimately they will result in a stepping up or a scaling down of the European Union's development activities.

Overall, however, at the beginning of the twenty-first century the general scene for EU development cooperation looks drastically different from what it was in the almost four decades of experience in the previous century. A very

wide spectrum of considerations and interests, much beyond those relating to the needs of developing countries in the South, now directs the European Union's agenda and policy-making efforts. In other words, interest in development cooperation with the South clearly has diluted. The exact implications of this evolution, however, will only become visible in the course of the next decade.

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